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ABSTRACT

Classroom discourse has participation structures that can be interpreted as the verbal equivalents of being sent to the corner, and when these structures operate repeatedly enough, educational authority and resistance become locked into ongoing opposition. The discursive details of classroom life, from a poststructuralist perspective, are what constitute authority, resistance, and failure. Excerpts from a small group literacy lesson involving 56 sixth graders, their 2 teachers, and 7 visiting teachers are used to show how resistance is socially constructed in much the same manner as is literacy. The difference between success and failure in the lesson discussed is mostly a matter of being included or excluded from the discourse circle. Resistance theory holds that some students are driven by social and economic forces to resist actively the roles and identities schools would provide for them. It is argued that resistance is not mere opposition to authority and that liberatory methods are no automatic antidote for resistance. Resistance is co-constructed by teachers and students. The interanimation of voices and shared respect are key ingredients in positive classroom discursive communities. Two figures illustrate the classroom environment. (Contains 20 references.) (SLD)

Discourse and Resistance in Urban Elementary Classrooms: A Poststructuralist Perspective

Paper presented at the annual meeting of AERA in San Francisco, April 22, 1995

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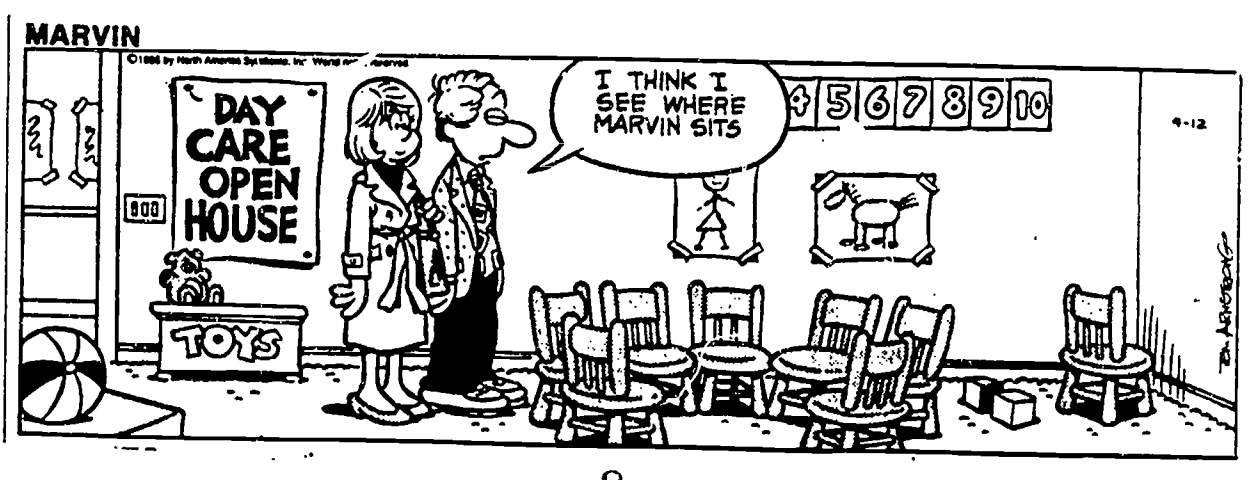
Background

An article in the April 15, 1995, *San Francisco Chronicle* describes a mother's shock at discovering that her second-grade son's school desk is "cordoned off on three sides by a 5-foot-high wooden partition." The mother has accused her son's teacher of treating him "like a monkey in a cage." School officials described the partitions as part of a study carrel, and they said that the boy has "exhibited disruptive behavior numerous times in the past, forcing the teacher to separate him from his classmates several times this school year." I mention this news report for its relevance to my remarks this morning. The physical isolation of students perceived as troublemakers is a common practice in classrooms, so common in fact that being sent to the principal or to the corner is the stuff of educational anecdote, lore and legend. It happens to Dennis and Calvin in the comics and even to baby Marvin:



Being sent to the corner, to a "quiet chair" or a "time out seat" is perceived in everyday perceptions of schooling more from the point of view of the school officials than the mother in the news report I referred to. Isolation from the classroom community is generally perceived as temporary and positive, and the necessity of separating a young person is even seen as romantically reflective of a strong, individualistic, go-against-the-grain, all-American personality. The point I want to make in my remarks is that isolation in classroom communities can also be rather permanent and negative. Classroom discourse has participation structures that can be interpreted as the verbal equivalents of being sent to the corner, and when these structures operate repeatedly enough, educational authority and resistance become locked in to ongoing opposition. The discursive details of classroom life, from the poststructuralist perspective I describe in this paper, are what constitute authority, resistance and failure. Through excerpts from small-group literacy instruction, I will show how resistance is socially constructed in much the came manner as literacy is. The difference between success and failure in the literacy lesson I discuss is mostly a matter of being included or excluded from the discourse circle. The mother in the news article is right to be concerned; her son's disruptiveness and isolation are forming a social identity that the second grader will probably carry right through his remaining years of school.

For six years I have been part of a school-university partnership designed to enhance the literacy learning of urban fifth and sixth graders. Through my involvement in this project, I have developed a deep interest in classroom communities, in the ways in which classroom communities influence student success and failure, and especially in resistance theory as an explanation for school failure. Resistance theory holds that some students are driven by social and economic forces to actively resist the roles and identities school would

provide for them. For several years I have been collecting and studying data related to student resistance -- classroom and school observations, interviews, artifacts, and audio and video recordings of classroom and small-group discourse.

My initial hunch was that resistance was related to authority in a rather neatly proportional way: the more authority teachers exert, the more resistance kids display. This view was consistent with the literature on educational resistance and with my own bias, or arrogance, since I saw the university's "whole language" methods as less likely to elicit resistance than the school's more traditional, authoritarian methods. Gradually I realized that the data indicated otherwise. Resistant students seemed just as resistant to our methods as they were to their own teachers' methods.

My current research focuses on problematizing the dualistic analysis typical of studies of educational resistance. In the main thrust of this research, I am analyzing discourse in small-group reading and writing discussions to probe into the possibility that resistance is co-constructed by teachers and students engaged in face-to-face interaction in classrooms and hallways. In company with Erickson (1989), I believe that human agency is found in particular events, culturally constituted yet situationally improvised choices of particular persons, especially as those persons are engaged in routine interaction face-to-face. I am working toward a book manuscript on "Authority and Resistance in Educational Discourse" and my AERA remarks will reflect four main ideas from the book: 1) resistance is not just opposition to authority as is often assumed; 2) liberatory methods are not an automatic antidote for resistance, again as is often assumed; 3) resistance is co-constructed by teachers and students through classroom discourse and events; and 4) the interanimation of voices and shared respect are key ingredients in positive classroom discursive communities.

Resistance from a Structuralist Perspective

Resistance in educational ethnographies refers to oppositional behavior in the form of sustained challenges to authority. In fact, what separates genuine resistance from ordinary misbehavior is exactly this quality of sustainment. The assumption in ethnographies of schooling is that something must feed or support oppositional behavior to keep it going; some set of forces beneath the surface of resistance must drive challenges to authority. The view that underlying forces constitute the true meaning of misbehavior in schools is the main theme in traditional structuralist perspectives on resistance.

Structuralism, of course, is the dominant 20th century intellectual tradition. Marx and Freud were probably the original structuralists, and other major proponents include Saussure, Lévi-Straus, Chomsky and Piaget; in fact, Piaget even wrote a book called Structuralism (1968). Structuralism in the social sciences is usually understood through a linguistic metaphor using Saussure's distinction between parole, or surface manifestations of language, and langue, "the general laws that are permanently and universally at work in all languages" (Saussure, 1959, p. 6). Rather than investigating what people actually said, Saussure was concerned with the objective structure of signs which make speech meaningful.

Structuralism sees the laws comprising the deep structure of behavior as a kind of grammar, a set of relations beneath the everyday narrative of experience. Underlying forces do their work through people, and in this manner structuralism decenters the individual subject "who is no longer to be regarded as the source or end of meaning" (Eagleton, 1993, p. 104). Thus structuralism gives us psychological and social structures, but it also gives us the problem of deterministic relations between structure and agency, a problem I shall come back to later in these remarks.

Structuralist Resistance Studies

Prior to the 1970's, serious misbehavior in schools was portrayed as delinquency and deviance and disaffection (Cohen, 1955 and 1966, for example). The term resistance is not used in this period, and the concept of resisting authority is represented as the absence of compliance, or as "minimal compliance," which is consistent with a notion of deviance as "lacking what is normal."

Two studies, Willis (1977) and McLaren (1986), can be used to exemplify the dominant current meaning of the word resistance in ethnographies of education. The term is generally indicative of active, positive and justified opposition; hence, the current views portrays resistance as active opposition rather than as deviance. What I'm calling the "structuralist perspective" on resistance refers to the additional quality of viewing schooling and resistance in terms of underlying forces, economic ones. The primary function of schooling is perceived as reproduction of the social order, as in Bowles and Gintis (1976), and resistance is perceived as opposition to the workings of social reproduction, as in Willis (1977) and Giroux (1983).

In the preface of Learning to Labor, Aronowitz claims that Willis gives us the concrete details of everyday life in schools, details which lend credibility to Marxist theories of educational reproduction of the social order. A close analysis of the book, however, reveals that the details of everyday life at Hammertown Boys School are presented as stasis, as a stand-off between opposing forces, rather than as a process, a dynamic engagement between individuals. They are details more at the level of langue (deep structural signs, rituals and relations) than parole (classroom discourse, what students and teachers actually say and do).

School is a battlefield, and resistant students or "lads" as they call themselves, are at war with the authority of teachers and reified knowledge.

Throughout the book we hear alternately from the lads and adults, the lads' teachers and administrators, parents and employers. We don't, however, observe the actual conflictual interaction between kids and educators, a fact which poststructuralist studies of conflict in schools would find curious. Instead, conflict is portrayed reactively, with one side alternately responding to the stimulus of what the other side has said or done.

Willis describes resistant behaviors by telling us that the lads "specialise in a caged resentment which always stops just short of confrontation" (p. 12-13). They sit as close to each other as possible, fidget constantly, sometimes put their heads sideways on their desks in apparent sleep, and other times they stare blankly at the wall or out the window. They leave class whenever possible and hide comic books and photos of nudes in their desks.

The closest Willis comes to presenting actual classroom discourse is this:

> During class teaching a mouthed imaginary dialogue counterpoints the formal instruction: 'No, I don't understand, you cunt'; 'What you on about, twit?'; 'Not fucking likely.'; 'Can I go home now please?' At the vaguest sexual double meaning giggles and 'whoas' come from the back accompanied perhaps by someone masturbating a gigantic penis with rounded hands above his head in compressed lipped lechery. (p. 13)

The lads express their opposition to schooling in other ways as well, through the symbolic opposition of clothing and hair style, through smoking and drinking and sexist remarks, through derisive comments about teachers and kids who conform to teacher expectations, and most frequently in oppositional activities and stances reported during interviews and small-group discussions with Willis. Willis also interviews teachers and administrators, but he never shows the lads and adults engaged in dialogue or other dynamic interaction.

We are left with the impression that educational resistance somehow emerges full-blown in high school, the product of fixed, static, ritualistic roles and expectations. If resistance has a developmental history and an interactive existence, these must happen before or outside of high school. Such is the structuralist tendency to see surface opposition as only the reflection of underlying forces at the societal or structural level.

McLaren's Schooling as a Ritual Performance (1986) emphasizes another characteristic of the structuralist intellectual tradition, the tendency to see forces and conditions of human life as organized into binary oppositions. He categorizes life at St. Ryan School, for example, into four types: the streetcorner state, the student state. the sanctity state, and the home state. The first two of these are most important to his subject, and he presents them as opposite forms of student interaction:

Excerpts from McLaren, Schooling as a Ritual Performance (1986), p. 91-92:

FORMS OF STUDENT INTERACTION

Streetcorner State	*Student State*
tribal	institutional
emotional, non-rational	cognitive, rational
random, imprecise gestures	non-random, precise gestures
ludic	serious
play (ritual frame)	work (ritual frame)
tapping inner resources	imitation of teachers
away from formality	formal, technical
sensuous	mechanical
cathartic	frustrating, tension-inducing
whimsy, frivolity	task-oriented
status determined by peers	status determined by institution

McLaren organizes his book by opposites as well; a chapter on "The Structure of Conformity," for example, is followed by one on "The Antistructure of Resistance." McLaren defines resistance as oppositional school behavior which contests the power and significance of school culture in general and instruction in particular. Working class kids resist more than rules and injunctions, he claims; they resist the distinction between the informal culture of the streets and the formal, dominant culture of the classroom.

Like Willis, McLaren takes most of the data he uses to describe resistance from interviews rather than from lived discourse. The one exception is when he describes a fight scene, after and away from school, in which he temporarily saves one of the students from punishment at the hands of a gang of other

students. Otherwise, resistance is presented as it was observed but not as it was enacted, giving it, (again like Willis) the character of persons reacting to each other interacting with each other in deterministic ways.

> What the 'resisters' tried to do was to disassemble, dismember and refashion pedagogical symbols: to turn the teachers' sacred symbols into defeatable ones. Resistance was a symbolic raid against consensus. Resisters challenged the legitimacy of the social pressure which read 'You must do this' or 'You must do that'. (p. 149)

* * *

> In most instances of severe breach, the lesson was halted and the offending students were ceremoniously marginalized, ridiculed and punished in order to serve as an example to the rest of the class. Often, instances of breach were handled on the spot by a curt verbal admonishment from the teacher. Students were usually aware when the teacher's saturation or tolerance level was reached (it varied with the different teachers) and would often try to keep the teacher at a pitch just below his breaking point.
>
> > Student: You can really get a teacher . . . make him go nuts. Sometimes you can get the vein in their foreheads to pop out. (p. 150)

To summarize so far, Willis and McLaren have similar ideas on why working class kids resist schooling. Both of them see deep structural forces driving conflict and resistance on the surface of school life, and both see resistance as comprised of actions and reactions. In Willis's case, structural forces set up an incongruence between the workplace and school; in McLaren's, the incongruence is between the rituals of streetcorner and school. Other

ethnographers, such as Everhart (1983) and Solomon (1992) have followed their lead.

Resistance and Agency

I want to make a transition to a discussion of a poststructuralist perspective on resistance by returning to the matter of structure and agency. Alpert claims that "resistance theories introduce the active role of human agency in the institutional contexts that reproduce social inequality" (1991, p. 351). Still, I believe the theories I have just reviewed are too deterministic to provide strong support for the argument that resistance is agentic. I am more inclined to agree with Fred Erickson on the importance of concrete events in constituting human agency, for example in his article on transformation and school success (1987) and in his AERA Vice Presidential address several years ago, the latter as rep esented here in excerpts from my notes:

> Theory does not reduce events to structures. What we must analyze remains a process of eventuation.
>
> * * *
>
> Situated actions and beliefs of social actors in particular scenes of everyday life are the locus not only for domination and hegemony, but for transformative emancipatory practice and change.
>
> * * *
>
> Human agency is found in particular events, culturally constituted yet situationally improvised choices of particular persons, especially as those persons are engaged in routine interaction face-to -face. (Erickson, 1989)

A Poststructuralist Resistance Study

Like Erickson, Davies (1990; 1993) finds the possibility of agency in awareness of the concrete details of situated human interaction. She describes this awareness as a feminist poststructuralist perspective:

> Structuralism recognizes the constitutive force of discourse and of the social structures that are constituted through those discourses. Poststructuralism opens up the possibility of agency to the subject through the very act of making visible the discursive threads through which their experience of themselves is woven. It also defines discourse and structure as something which can be acted upon and changed. Although many poststructuralist writers do not see any revolutionary potential in poststructuralist theory, finding themselves lost in an anomic relativism, many feminist writers do see that potential. . . . In seeing how it is that power and maleness are constituted in relation to each other, in understanding how it is that apparently intractable and debilitating patterns of desire are put in place and maintained in place, in discovering the possibility for disrupting old discourses, paths open up for speaking into existence other ways of being which are not organised in terms of the binary opposition between male and female." (Davies, 1993, p.12)

Davies & Munro (1987) report a study of a resistant student who shouts, fights other children, threatens them with a raised chair and desk, resists sitting down with the teacher, and finally exits the scene through a classroom window. Teachers and student teachers usually see the videotape of this student in action as frightening, as evidence of a student with serious psychological problems. In their analysis of the videotape and transcript, however, Davies and Munro show how

student resistance, like compliance, is achieved through active co-construction and negotiation between teachers and students. Teacher-student and student-student interactions close off compliant student behavior for the resistant student and make only the social identity of resistance accessible to him. The student, for example, repeats comments from Arnold Horschack in "Welcome Back Kotter," and the teacher reminds the other students to obey her rule of totally ignoring the resistant student until he expresses himself according to correct classroom standards. This series of interactive events continues: the student is silenced and isolated, his antics escalate, the teacher unites the class against him and confers with him in a close and controlling manner, his antics escalate some more, and so on. In this study, resistance is the result of situated action, interaction and negotiation.

Examples from My Own Studies of Resistance

It is no accident that the Davies & Munro (1987) study of resistance takes place in an elementary school, focuses on small groups and avoids structuralist epistemologies. To study resistance as social construction, we have to study resistance as the social formation of identity, and this means studying resistance as it is being constituted in elementary and middle schools. High school is usually too late to study the formation of identities resistant to schooling, since most high school students have already formed generally resistant or compliant attitudes toward school. Similarly, whole-class discussions are less likely to capture the discursive details of the social construction of resistance than are smaller groups of students and teachers. To study the role of discourse in resistance, we must zoom in on small-group discussions. Finally, because we are interested in younger children, we must drop the criterion of deep-structure-variety political resistance which is usually part of the conception of resistance in studies of

secondary schools (as in Everhart, 1983, for example). Play takes the place of politics in the resistant behaviors of elementary students. Accordingly, my study of educational resistance focuses on playful scenes during small-group discussions involving fifth and sixth graders and their teachers. I take my data from observations, audiotapes and transcripts of teacher-led small group literacy discussions and follow-up interviews in two fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms at a public urban middle school. The school is Central Park School[1] and serves an African American neighborhood. It has approximately 600 students across two levels: an early childhood center, grades pre-K through 2, and an academy, grades 3 through 8. The small group discussions were part of the work of a school-university partnership connecting my university and Central Park, a partnership set up to provide school-based pre-practicum tutoring and teaching experiences for graduate students and to enhance the literacy learning and college aspirations of the fifth and sixth graders.

The small-group discussion I focus on in this paper took place during a seven-month literacy project in the sixth-grade classrooms. Seven visiting teachers from the university, the two sixth-grade teachers and 56 students in the two classes worked in groups consisting of one teacher and four students. The groups discussed readings and wrote in response to a series of tasks related to the readings. The literary work under discussion in the data presented here was an excerpt from Ron Jones' The Acorn People (1976), a nonfiction book about the capabilities of disabled children.

Resistance takes two principal forms in the excerpts from this small-group literacy lesson. It shows up in brief comments when a resistant participant plays a different role from the one assigned by the classroom communication game, and it shows up in extended silences on the part of a resistant student and challenges to his resistance on part of other members of the group, including the

teacher. In both of these manifestations, resistance is initiated and sustained through interactive language processes. It is here that resistance is co-constructed by classroom discourse.

As I said in my introduction, each of the classrooms in my study has at least one "time-out chair" or "quiet seat." This is a student desk which has been removed from close proximity to other student desks and placed in a corner of the room or near the teacher's desk. Students are sent to the time out chair or to the corner when their behavior, in the teacher's judgment, is sufficiently in violation of classroom rules to merit separation from the group. The time-out chair thus is a place to isolate single students from the classroom discourse community; examples of classrooms with time-out chairs from my research are shown in the diagrams in Figures 1 and 2.

Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

I show these examples of being isolated from the discourse community because the small-group discourses which are the focus of my study frequently have events which are the dialogic equivalent of being sent to the time-out chair. Students displaying resistant behavior are often met with responses from the teacher or other students that contribute to and amplify their resistance. As the resistance grows, the resistant student becomes further removed from the business of the small-group discourse. Thus, a playful, mildly resistant comment can snowball into an incident which results in the resistant student being separated or isolated from the discourse. In this manner, a momentary display of resistance can become a lasting isolation from the group discussion. I want to discuss this co-construction of resistance in terms of a graphic metaphor of a circle of

discourse. The circle represents the boundary between those included and those excluded from the discourse at any given moment. At the beginning of the following excerpt from the sixth-grade literacy lesson, for example, a student I'll call Mark has taken himself out of the circle of discourse by daydreaming, a fairly common way of resisting the authority of teachers who have difficulty commanding respect and attention from all students (Siddle Walker, 1992).

In this excerpt Mark is caught sleeping by his peers, who briefly make him the object of their derision. I have used italics and large type to highlight the resistant portions of this segment from the small-group discussion because the segment shows what are really two separate but overlapping conversations, one the "official" or "business-like" group discussion, and the other a side conversation commenting on the silent student's resistance to the official lesson. By highlighting the resistant portions of the excerpt [Overhead "Sleeping 2"], we notice how the silence of the resistant student is enforced and extended by the group:

(a) Teacher: OK/ let me read it again/
(b) Tashay: [To Mark] Mark, why you ain't sayin' nuttin'?
(c) Darelle: [To Mark] Why are you tryin' to sleep?
(d) Tashay: I know/ ((Laugh))
(e) Teacher: - Mark/ let's see if Mark can figure it out/
(f) Mark: - [To Tashay and Darelle] Quit buggin me/
(g) Tashay: I know/ Yeah/
(h) Teacher: Shh/
(i) Mark: [To Tashay and Darelle] Let's see you bug me/
(...)
(j) Darelle, Tashay, James: ((Laugh))

(k) Teacher: - "He called down to us"/

(l) Tashay: - ((Laugh))

(m) James: - Oh god/ ((laugh))

(n) Teacher: "Martin called down to us/ 'Hey you guys it's easy.' Martin was sitting down facing downhill. By moving his legs under him"/

(o) Darelle: "in a squat position"/

(p) Teacher: "in a squat position, pushing back, he edged up the hill in this sitting posture"/

(q) Darelle: He probably had a/ uh/

(r) James: Maybe he was handicapped/

(s) Teacher: Wait/ shh/

(t) Darelle: He was probably using his legs and his hands/

(u) Teacher: OK/ wait/ let's see what Mark says/

(v) Mark: Maybe he/ ((inaudible))/ and has his hand on the mountain/ and pushed up/

(w) Teacher: He pushed himself up/ How did he do that?

(x) Darelle: Good job/ Marky/

This lesson is an exercise in making inferences based on information obtained from reading. In an IRE sequence just before the start of this segment of the transcript, the teacher has asked how Martin, one of the handicapped characters in the story, has managed to move up the mountain, and first Tashay and then James have responded incorrectly. The teacher begins to repeat the reading that contains the information necessary for inferring the correct answer when Tashay asks, *Mark, why you ain't sayin' nuttin'?* Mark has been quiet for a little more than two minutes. Notice that there is a double layer of resistance

here; Mark is resisting the lesson by tuning it out and letting his boredom show, and Tashay is resisting it by postponing the teacher's re-reading of the passage while she playfully picks on Mark for his resistance. Darelle quickly joins the play with, *Why are you tryin' to sleep?* and Tashay agrees that they have, indeed, caught Mark sleeping: *I know/ ((Laugh)).* Notice that the teacher picks up on the effort to make Mark feel uncomfortable for being caught daydreaming: *Mark/ let's see if Mark can figure it out/.* Quite without meaning to, I think, the teacher joins in the attempt to make fun of Mark by trying to restore the business function and wholeness of the group through a strategy of targeting the next IRE sequence directly at Mark. Perhaps intending to help Mark, Darelle and James try to provide the inference the teacher wants in (r) and (t), but the teacher silences them in (s) and (u). The question is intended for Mark alone, and answering it correctly is the price he must pay for re-admission to the discourse circle. Mark makes an attempt to answer it, and the teacher repeats Mark's answer and asks for more information in (w): "He pushed himself up/ How did he do that?" Repetition of what someone else has said, what Bakhtin calls ventriloquation and the interanimation of voices, is one of the primary ways discourse circles are socially constructed, and here the repetition of Mark's words by the teacher suggests that the teacher is about to let Mark back in to the circle. Before Mark can answer, however, Darelle in (x) switches the discourse back to resistance and exclusionary derision with a sarcastic, *Good job/ Marky/.* Tashay answers the teacher's question, the lesson goes on, and Mark is left out in the cold. About four more minutes go by before Mark speaks again, and when he does, his answer to one of the teacher's question goes unheeded.

In the space of this segment, Mark has stepped out, or "slept out," of the discourse circle and tried to get back in, but he has found his way blocked,

playfully at first by his friends, then powerfully by the teacher, and finally and most definitely by a resistant insider who chides Mark for wimpishly and unsuccessfully giving in to the teacher to gain re-admission. Clearly in this example Mark's resistance is co-constructed by his peers and the teacher. In fact, it is the teacher who turns the resistance into a test of Mark's ability not only to make inferences, but to make them quickly. By insuring that Mark fails the test, a fellow student helps the teacher turn resistance into gatekeeping (as in Gilmore, 1985).

In my next example I want to explore further the meaning of the concept of a circle of classroom discourse by actually drawing the discourse circle over a portion of another segment of the transcript. Here is the full text of the segment [Overhead "Chains 2"], again with the resistant comments highlighted in italics and large type:

(a) Darelle: (referring to his notebook)) This must have cost a lot of money for all of us/ It cost 99 cents/

(b) James: WOW/

(c) Teacher: OK/ Now why were they climbing the mountain/ Let's go back to that question/ Why were they climbing the mountain?/ Mark, why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(d) James: [To Darelle] (...) forty Dollars/

(e) Mark: To get a medal/

(f) Teacher: OK/ [To Darelle] Darelle/ why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(g) Darelle: Probably just to do it/ That's what I think/

(h) Teacher: Just to do it/ [To Tashay] Tashay/ why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(i) Darelle: Or to show that/

(j) Tashay: I think/

(k) Darelle: umm/ the village that they know how to/ uhm/ dang/ what is that word? survive?

(l) Tashay: Yeah/ it's survive/

(m) Darelle: [To Tashay] Why'd you take my word?

(n) James: ((Laugh))

(o) Tashay: ((Laugh))

(p) James: Saying that if they're handicapped they could do/ just because they're handicapped doesn't mean they can't do/ climb mountains and do things/

(q) Tashay: That really/ that/ um/ ordinary people can do/

(r) James: They may have been trying to show people that they could do it/

The italics show that there are two playful, resistant exchanges in this segment, the first involving Darelle and James, who find the cost of their notebooks more interesting than what the teacher is saying, and the second involving Darelle's jokingly complaining that Tashay has stolen his word. The segment also contains three rapid-fire IRE sequences, the first when the teacher asks Mark the "Why" question, the second when he asks Darelle the same question and the third when the teacher asks Tashay the question. At this point in the lesson, the resistant exchanges and the IRE sequences are the default discursive moves for the students and the teacher respectively. These constitute dyadic discursive circles as indicated here, with the resistant circles in bold:

(a) Darelle: (referring to his notebook)) This must have cost a lot of money for all of us/ It cost 99 cents/

(b) James: WOW/

(c) Teacher: OK/ Now why were they climbing the mountain/ Let's go back to that question/ Why were they climbing the mountain?/ Mark, why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

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(q) Tashay: That really/ that/ um/ ordinary people can do/

(r) James: They may have been trying to show people that they could do it/

So far the diagram shows the lesson to be a combination of brief businesslike exchanges, represented by the IRE circles, and brief occurrences of joking and playing, represented by the resistant circles. Notice that there is little or no coherence or continuity, other then the teacher's directiveness, across these circles. There is more going on here, though, as can be seen in the next diagram using a shaded discourse circle (actually more of a square) to represent the longer discussion at the heart of the segment:

(a) Darelle: (referring to his notebook)) This must have cost a lot of money for all of us/ It cost 99 cents/

(b) James: WOW/

(c) Teacher: OK/ Now why were they climbing the mountain/ Let's go back to that question/ Why were they climbing the mountain?/ Mark, why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(d) James: [*[To Darelle] (...) forty Dollars/*

(e) Mark: [To get a medal/

(f) Teacher: OK/ [To Darelle] Darelle/ why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(g) Darelle: Probably just to do it/ That's what I think/

(h) Teacher: Just to do it/ [To Tashay] Tashay/ why do you think they were climbing the mountain?

(i) Darelle: [Or to show that/

(j) Tashay: [I think/

(k) Darelle: umm/ the village that they know how to/ uhm/ dang/ what is that word? survive?

(l) Tashay: Yeah/ it's survive/

(m) Darelle: [To Tashay] Why'd you take my word?

(n) James: ((Laugh))

(o) Tashay: ((Laugh))

(p) James: Saying that if they're handicapped they could do/ just because they're handicapped doesn't mean they can't do/ climb mountains and do things/

(q) Tashay: That really/ that/ um/ ordinary people can do/

(r) James: They may have been trying to show people that they could do it/

The discussion in the shaded circle is an extended chain of comments, one of the longer chains, in fact, in the entire lesson. As in the earlier excerpt I examined, discussion here is built to a large extent on ventriloquation, the repetition of what someone else has said. Darelle, the main participant in both resistant circles, is also the initiator of the extended chain when he takes a second try at answering the "Why" question from the teacher. When Darelle is hesitant about deciding whether the word "survive" is appropriate to his meaning, Tashay helps him out, prompting Darelle's joking with her. Next, James contributes his interpretation of the meaning of "survive" in terms of the story, and Tashay helps him out just as she had done with Darelle. James then finishes his thought by repeating what Tashay has said. According to my field notes, this discussion is exactly what the teacher wanted the students to do in this exercise in inference making. Darelle takes the lead in drawing appropriate inferences from the reading, and the others collaborate with him in constructing and explicitly stating the inference. Curiously, though, the teacher seems not to be listening, or perhaps he is tuned in only to the resistant comments. In any case, the teacher concludes the discussion by changing the topic in (s). Still, the teacher is included in the discursive circle by virtue of having asked the "Why" question of Darelle in (f). Only Mark is excluded from the circle, perhaps in a continuation of his earlier exclusion for trying and failing to re-enter the circle after having been caught sleeping.

Conclusion

This study uses a poststructuralist method to investigate educational resistance. The structuralist conception of resistance sees oppositional behavior as a series of reactions, with oppositional lines clearly drawn, and with teachers and students acting and responding to each other in ways determined by deep

structural forces. The poststructural conception adds a view of resistance as negotiated through interaction, with teachers and students co-constructing resistance. Resistant behaviors are interwoven with other elements of classroom discourse, and membership in the discursive circle changes from moment to moment, at times in a manner quite independent of the official business of the discourse. The full exclusion of a resistant student, however, is only accomplished through a combination of the power entailed by the authority of the teacher and the power contained in the final derisive remark of another one of the students, their leader, Darelle. Each of the students other than Mark resist and get away with it; they step outside of the circle with only one foot, and they know when to step back in. Resistance in this view has a history; it begins with playfulness and boredom and only later turns into anger and frustration and the apparent formation of identity as a resistant student. Perhaps most importantly, resistance from the poststructuralist perspective is socially constructed. Resistant students are not resistant all by themselves. Resistance is constituted through discourse, and peers and teachers collaborate in its construction.

The problem of authority and resistance in education is a reflection of the problem of structure and agency in social research. From the structuralist perspective, we cannot reconcile the theory that structures exercise control and constraint over agents, with the belief that resistance provides some degree of agency to students and educators in their relations with social structures. The poststructuralist stance allows us to view structure interactively, that is, as "situated actions and beliefs of social actors in particular scenes of everyday life," in Erickson's words, rather than reactively.

Perhaps the reason we have such a hard time putting structure and agency together again is that we have taken them apart in the first place. I am reminded of Vygotsky's comment on the prospect of studying why water extinguishes fire

by separating water into its constituent elements; we could only be further puzzled by the realization that oxygen sustains fire and hydrogen burns. "Nothing is left to the investigator," Vygotsky adds, "but to search out the mechanical interaction of the two elements in the hope of reconstructing, in a purely speculative way, the vanished properties of the whole." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 4) So it is with resistance. Until we study authority and resistance, and structure and agency, together, interactively, we will continue to be puzzled by the vanished properties of the whole.

Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.

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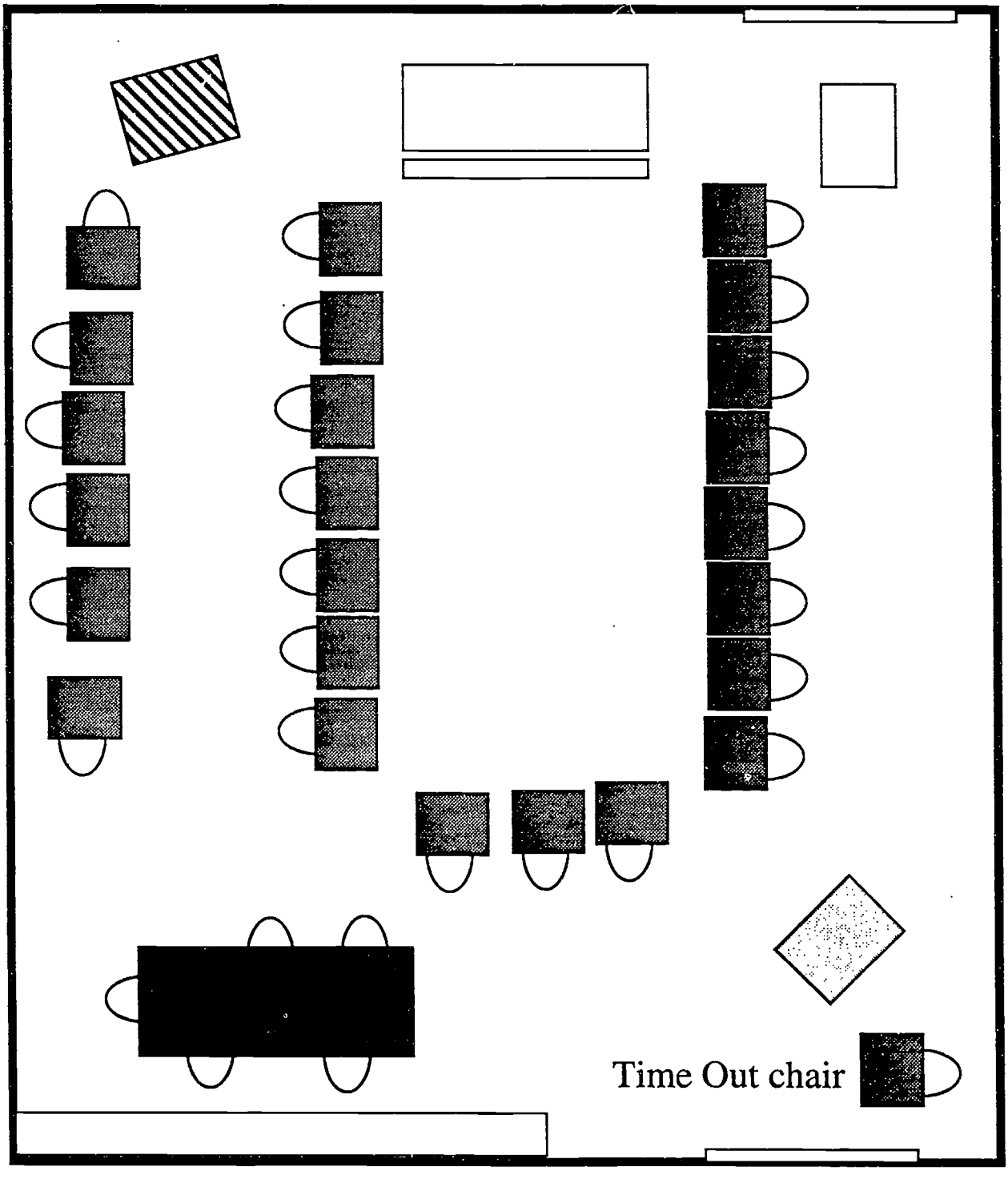

Figure 1

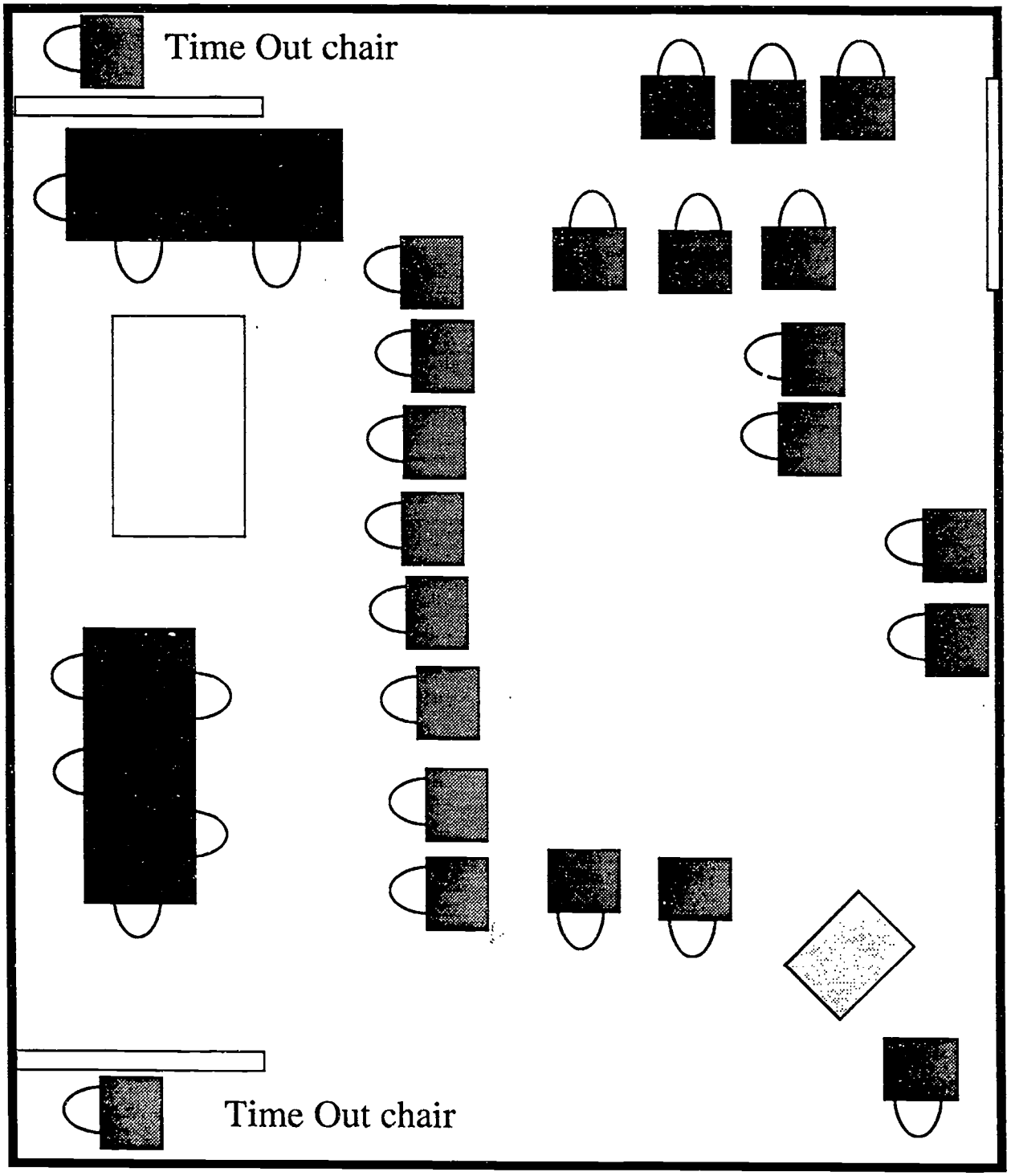

Figure 2